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THE VIRGINIANS AND CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT

BY THOMAS NELSON PAGE

WHEN Thackeray put his finishing-touch to the portrait of Esmond—the character which he is said to have loved the best of all his creation—the finest gentleman, perhaps, ever painted, he sent him overseas at last, to spend the evening of his life in Virginia. And later, in his sequel to that novel—almost the only successful sequel to a novel of first rank ever written, he throws his portrait on the screen in a fine sentence which sets the blood to tingling. It is in the scene in *The Virginians*, when young Harry Warrington returns to England and becomes a guest in the house of Lord Castlewood, whose title had rightfully belonged to his grandfather, Colonel Esmond, of Virginia. The Baroness Bernstein—once the beautiful Beatrix Esmond, was in the company, and she directed young Warrington's attention to the portrait of Colonel Esmond, hanging on the Castlewood wall, and spoke of him warmly, as well she might. None can forget the scene when Colonel Esmond, rode down to Castlewood after Beatrix's lover, and finding him to be Prince James himself, for whom he was imperiling his life, broke his sword and turned his back on him.

Now with Esmond in his grave in Virginia, Beatrix pointed Warrington to his portrait on the Castlewood wall and spoke her admiration which had come too late. To give it in Thackeray's own words:

“The Virginian? What's he good for? I always thought he was good for nothing but to cultivate tobacco and my grandmother,” says my Lord, laughing. She struck her hand on the table with an energy that made the glasses dance. “I say he was the best of you all.”

Virginia was the oldest of the American colonies. She extended once from the French colonies along the St. Law-

rence far toward the Spanish colonies of Florida. Inland, she stretched to the furthest sea and she took in all islands along the coast. Later, New England was cut off from her territory; yet later, Maryland and the Middle States and part of the Carolinas were taken from her. In a great crisis she gave up to the Union the Northwest Territory, and Kentucky likewise; and finally West Virginia was cut from her remaining territory.

Virginia is scarcely a territorial term—at least not simply this. Like the term, “The South,” she is only in part territorial; in part, she is a state of mind. She is in the hearts of her sons and her sons’ sons, if they be loyal to her principles, wherever they go, and she has sent them forth filled with her spirit so long and so far that she is greater to-day than when she bordered the Great Lakes to the northward, and to the eastward, took in the isles of the sea.

Was this spirit in any way distinctive; and if so whence got it this distinction? What were its sources? What its scope? What its direction and effect? The answer to all is—Patriotism.

And first of its distinction. Can any one believe that it was a mere accident that Washington and the men who surrounded him and made this country what it became—giving it its peculiar frame and form of government and stamping in its Constitution the essence of Liberty, were Virginians? Can any one believe it was an accident that Washington and Jefferson; Henry and Mason; the Randolphs; the Lees; Thomas Nelson; Cary; Edmund Pendleton; the Harrisons; and a score of others—their equals in virtue and patriotism and force, if less noted, all appeared in the same region, in the same crisis? Can we believe that it was mere chance that Madison, Monroe, Marshall, Wythe, Lewis, Giles and Herndon, and a score more of their kind followed hard on the heels of the others, all from the same workshop? Was it mere fortune that Henry Clay and Winfield Scott, Zachary Taylor, and Benjamin Harrison; Rives and Tyler all sprang together from the same soil? Or coming on down a generation, was it an accident that Lee and Stonewall Jackson, and Joseph E. Johnston, and J. E. B. Stuart, and Matthew Fontaine Maury, all came from Virginia, together with a not inconsiderable fraction of that soldiery, who according to some high authorities were the most notable fighting force that the world has ever known?

Was it mere chance that in that little corner of the world which we call Greece,—but which was only a part of Greece—during the Periclean age, such light burst forth that it has continued to shine throughout the world from that day to this, and has given mankind ever since, the models of beauty in its indestructible forms of liberty and of classic art? Or when Rome suddenly evolved, in a few short generations, law and order from the previous chaos of Barbarism, and gave us the models of virtue whom Plutarch has left in his immortal pages—Was that chance?

To hold this, would indeed be to offer on the altar of Fortune, the rich sacrifice of Reason. There must be some firmer ground than this for all these extraordinary developments. When a new star shines, it does not come by chance; but in accordance with laws, and when a galaxy shall appear, there too, the light is poured in obedience to laws often so silent in their operation as to be known only through their effects; but none the less laws.

In Virginia, in one chamber of an old country house were born two signers of the Declaration of Independence, and General Robert E. Lee—while from within little more than a day's ride of that mansion, came five Presidents of the United States, with Washington at their head. Chancellor Wythe, signer of the Declaration of Independence as he was, is probably hardly known to the present generation save as a name and a vague memory. Yet in his day he was so highly esteemed, even among those contemporaries whose names are known the world over, that men eagerly sought the privilege of placing their sons in his law-office or under his charge. Among his pupils were four young men: Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, John Marshall, and Henry Clay. Now, could it have been a mere freak of fortune, that those four young men were pupils of the simple Virginia Chancellor—or did, sitting at the feet of that Gamaliel, have some bearing on the development and future destinies of the author of the Declaration of Independence; of the father of the Constitution; of the great Chief Justice, and of the great Commoner, Henry Clay?

And now let us pass to the consideration of the influences that produced such a result.

To summarize them: The people of Virginia were originally almost purely English or Scotch, into which came later, a small infusion of Huguenot and a larger infusion of Scotch-

Irish—all of sterling stock. The element of transported persons, of which so much has been attempted to be made of late by some, was so small as to be negligible. The Virginians were composed of a strong and adventurous element of the people from whence they came, and the weak among them perished in the "seasoning," leaving only the stronger and more vigorous portion. They possessed and brought over with them the firm belief of the English in representative government and individual liberty, as conquered by their forefathers in the old country and guaranteed to them in their charters. They believed absolutely in the tenets of the Christian religion as held in England; they believed in the administration of the law as practised there, and in the liberties of the people as achieved and maintained there. They did not believe in these fundamentals half-heartedly; but believed in them with all their heart and soul. For their beliefs they were ever ready to fight, and at need to die.

The conditions in the New Country broadened and strengthened them immeasurably. Facing the wilderness and the savage, the feeble acquired strength; the timid acquired courage. The fittest survived. The frontier life gave them strength, courage, endurance, breadth, and independence. It was a stern school and they either learned its lessons or perished. In the organization of their society every man was a soldier; most men were rulers over some part of the earth. As they evinced ability, wisdom, and thrift, they were admitted to take part in the government. If they obtained wealth it was spent in enlarging the things over which they ruled, and this increased their responsibilities; strengthened their fiber and broadened their scope. Money, as such, they cared little for, and they were equally ready to borrow or lend it—if they had it. At least, they spent it and never amassed it.

The life tended to reflection, and the reflection was directed mainly to matters of government—to the relation between man and men. Liberty was their passion. Thus, they became trained political philosophers, as steeped in the theories of government as the Athenians of Plato's day. And thus, when the great exigencies came at the time of the Revolution and afterward, Virginia was full of men who could, at an hour's notice, propound and debate the basic principles of government, with a knowledge and an insight

never excelled in any period known to history. The pole-star of their lives was Liberty: Liberty as defined in their charters: Liberty as conceived in their enlarged minds. For all the rest they cared not.

They set up an elective representative Assembly before any other colony had landed on American shores. When James undertook to subvert their liberties and vacate their charters, they refused to give up their books to the King's Commissioners, and when the Clerk of their Assembly gave up copies, they stood him in the pillory and clipped his ear. In the religious war that was waged in England, they sided with the Crown and Episcopacy. They offered a kingdom to the exiled Charles. "Whole for Monarchy," wrote of them one at this time. Virginia was always whole for everything she was for at all. She so withstood Cromwell's ships that they were fain to make a treaty with her, as if she had been an independent power. Yet, when later Charles invaded her rights and granted the "Northern Neck" to his favorites—Culpeper and Arlington, she flamed—and when Sir William Berkeley refused to commission her leaders to defend her borders against Indian ravages, she burst into revolution with Nat Bacon, the rebel, at her head. The gallant young leader died, and the revolution was quenched in blood by Sir William Berkeley—in so much blood that Charles removed the doughty old Governor, with the fleer that the old fool had "hanged more men in that naked country for his little Rebellion," than he himself had hanged for the murder of his father. But though suppressed, the seeds of liberty remained alive, and a hundred years after, the Revolution came again; the Royal Governors in Virginia and the other Colonies as well, were driven out and Liberty was the reward.

When the Stamp Act was put into execution, Virginia was ready for the work in hand, her leaders trained: Patrick Henry, of Hanover, a County Court lawyer, wrote on the fly-leaf of a copy of Coke—upon—Littleton, which he had in his saddle-bags, and which constituted a considerable fraction of his Law Library, his famous resolutions. They were debated at Williamsburg with an ability which would not have been excelled in Westminster Hall. Later on, George Mason, a Virginia planter, drew the Virginia Bill of Rights, esteemed by some the greatest of State papers, and the Resolutions in the Virginia Convention, under which her dele-

gates, in the Continental Congress, were instructed to act and declare the Colonies Free and Independent States, were offered by Thomas Nelson, a young planter, and were seconded and debated by Pendleton and Henry. And acting in pursuance of their instruction, Richard Henry Lee, who offered the Resolution in Congress, was first chosen, and in his absence, Thomas Jefferson drafted the Declaration of Independence. They were all capable of doing it. The only question was, who could do it best.

Posterity has rendered its verdict and declared with John Adams, that the best man to do it was the Virginian, Thomas Jefferson, the most elegant pen in America—the man who as a youth had declared of Henry that he “spoke, as Homer wrote.”

So it was in the generations that followed, even down to the time of our war. In every crisis, Virginians were among the leaders. The Virginia idea was ever apparent if not prevalent. It crossed the mountains to Kentucky; it crossed the rivers to Ohio and what was termed, the West. Lincoln and Grant were the product of this transmission.

Now why was this? What were the principles which gave them this abiding quality of leadership?

Allusion has already been made to some of the causes. I think that the others resolve themselves into the fact that they were founded on the basic virtues of both public and domestic life. On this anvil was forged the character that produced Constitutional Liberty in this land.

The writer asked once a great New Englander what he considered the chief distinguishing trait of the Puritan Fathers, and he answered, “Their Character.” It was a wise answer. Their sense of duty to God was the foundation of the Puritan’s character. God-fearing men who lived as in the sight of God and strove to obey what they understood to be His law, grew, of necessity, to be men who feared none else and naught else.

Yet my New England friend was wholly wrong in one assumption. He knew New England but not Virginia, nor the rest of the country. He thought that this firm character and the cause of its setting in such form, were the sole possession of the Puritans. This appears to have been long the general impression.

Until just now, there has been an apparent impression which somehow became quite general out of the South, that

nearly everything that has counted for much in the history of this country, either sprang from or took its color from New England. Much of the history which has been written of later years, teaches this—inferentially, perhaps; but quite distinctly.

For example, the New England Puritans have been declared by those who have undertaken to set up as teachers, to have been the only section of the population inspired by high ethical principles. While, on the other hand, the population of the South, particularly of Virginia, have been assumed to have been a roystering, hell-raking lot of adventurers who, ready enough maybe to fight in any cause, good or bad, yet wanted the essential principle of serious character, from which alone great achievement could spring. As I have elsewhere pointed out, no characterization could be further from the truth. The precious prize of Constitutional Liberty, which our fathers so largely secured and transmitted to us, could have been won only by long suffering, goodness, righteousness, and truth—by the fruits of the Spirit. A tree is known by its fruits.

Now what shall we do to preserve the precious heritage left us? Over a century and a quarter has gone by since our forefathers, by their character, created a new Nation, and founded it forever on the principles of liberty. The little nation which they created has spread, until it numbers nearly one hundred million people. It covers nearly a whole continent and its influences have extended to every shore of Christendom.

The conditions that have arisen are so novel that the thoughtful man is often called to consider whether our fathers could have contemplated such strange conditions, and whether their governmental theories are well adapted to the solution of the new questions which have arisen.

Where they had poverty, we have wealth, beyond the dreams of avarice and even of the imagination; where they had weakness, we have power—a wealth and power that is affecting the entire civilization of the world.

We see new conditions springing up about us on all sides and the question is how shall we adapt ourselves to them? It behooves all thoughtful men to consider with all their powers the steps which we shall take in the solution of these vital problems which confront us.

Out of our wealth and power have sprung the greatest

dangers to our welfare as a people, as is the history of all republics. Well may we pray, as in the old Liturgy, "In all times of our tribulation and in all times of our wealth, Good Lord, deliver us." The road by which republics rise is the road of self-denial and unselfishness; the road by which republics fall is the road of ease and personal indulgence. These are the perils which sap the forces of freemen.

I do not believe that we as a people or a nation are going to ruin; because I believe that there is enough patriotism and high principle—enough character left in our people to preserve us, at need, in every extremity. When a great moral principle is involved they can be counted on. But there is even now enough peril to cause a grave disquietude among thoughtful men. We have approached a point from which many republics have hastened to decay. We have attained to conditions which sap character and weaken the forces of a people. We have reached a point where we are reckoned by the outside world as among the wealthiest, if not the wealthiest of the nations of the earth; but also as the most commercial-minded people of the earth and, possibly, as the most selfish. We are charged with having less regard for the common principles of commercial honor and less reverence for law, than any other people. Are these charges true? Have they any foundation whatever to rest on? If they are true, even measurably true, then it behooves every man in America to pause and consider how we may so rectify our conduct, private and national, as to relieve us from the stigma, and once more recover the old foundation of upright conduct and righteous dealing. Never at any period of her history, has the country needed the aid and devotion of her sons more. That eternal vigilance is the price of liberty is an eternal truth, and it is never more true than, when lapped in luxurious ease, we begin to dream that the established order must always prevail. "Is not this great Babylon that I have builded?" exclaimed the mightiest monarch of the earth. But that night God weighed him and finding him wanting cast him by and Darius the Median took the kingdom.

We have problems to solve, of which our forefathers in their furthest vision of the future, never dreamed.

All sorts of problems—new problems, are before us. Race problems, economic problems, governmental problems. For years Virginia and the rest of the South have faced one

of the greatest race problems that has existed in the World. A problem which in some form has dominated the course of this country for a hundred years. Its influence is not confined to the South alone, for it permeates the whole course of our national life. At length it has appeared to be settled, at least it has been relegated to the background by other problems more pressing. But it is not settled, it is there, and it will require all the courage, all the patience, and all the wisdom of all the people to settle it, or even to control it along proper lines of moderation, justice, and righteousness. Other race problems, hardly less imminent and important, have come up of late years, mainly in other parts of the country than the South, yet their influence also, like that of the Southern race problem, reaches in every direction to the farthest confines of the country and affects the vital spirit of this Government.

Besides these race problems there are internal problems which are influencing beyond compute, the spirit of our people and affecting the very structure of our government. Among these problems is one which may be said to have its central office in our great metropolitan city. It is the great economic problem of the acquirement, application, and control of Wealth. This problem permeates the very being of this Government, and like the others, it stares us in the face with a challenge for its solution which will not be silenced. The problem of wealth is no new problem. A profound student of government has said that, "The two great perils to ancient Democracy were Ignorance and Wealth." As you always have the poor with you, so you always have the rich with you; but the problem of wealth beyond the dream of avarice, gained through the manipulation of governmental machinery, so that it finally controls the operation of the government, is at least sufficiently new in our own country to be still regarded with reasonable surprise and alarm. Every man of sense must recognize the fact that wealth cannot be equalized, and every thoughtful man equally recognizes the fact that there are limits beyond which wealth cannot be properly acquired or held for private or selfish ends.

This problem is new, at least in its aspect of a governmental problem. There was, as I have said, wealth in past periods of the Government; but men then used their wealth for the country, and they did not use the country to amass

riches and pile them up only to acquire more riches. Why, there are men to-day who, through using the country, using the organization of the governmental machinery for their private ends, have engrossed in their hands riches beyond compute. They refer this condition to power of organization. The power of organization is a priceless gift, but when its possessors appraise it at hundreds of millions the people begin to think. They know who pay for it.

But not content with possessing all this wealth, they have employed it in subsidizing the public machinery of government to amass more. They or some of them have, in some parts of the land, secured control of the representatives of the people in their legislative assemblies; they have even dared to reach out and lay their unholy hands, at times, on the sacred tribunals of justice, until a grave question has arisen whether the people will longer abide by the present system of representative government—that is, in plain language, whether they will trust their own representatives and their own judges. It is no longer a question of mere property, of mere wealth. It has come to be a question that reaches to the foundations of our government—to be the question: Shall this Government endure? A committee of Congress, which has been investigating the matter, has, according to the reports in the press, stated that, through a vast system of interlocking directorates—a few men, with a sort of central office in one great city, control some forty billions of the property-values of this country—that is, about half of the wealth of this nation. They control the great railways; the great steamship lines; the great coal-fields; all the great semi-public arteries of the country.

At the head of this mighty system of property control are but a few men—fewer perhaps than two hundred. They have their personal virtues—they are men of standing in every city of the land—they are large givers—of late very large givers—though they give only to a small number what they sap from the hearts of all. But they are a privileged class, and Democracy cannot tolerate a privileged class save as character and other personal endowments exalt one man above another.

This great system of interlocking directorates, with its Briarian arms, is strangling the old ideas on which this Government is founded. Does any one outside of that coterie believe that the people will stand this much longer?

They will not. The peril is that in their determination to overthrow this system of greed and avarice—this system of tampering with our governmental machinery, they may destroy the principles themselves on which this government rests—the principle of the independence of the judiciary, and possibly the principle of representative government itself. Owing to the action of that privileged class, both are imperiled now.

Formerly the men of wealth, holding high position, were scrupulous in all matters that related to the public, and held themselves as representatives, and in some sort as trustees of the public. Could even flattery say that these later representatives of vast wealth have been scrupulous in their dealing with the public? What is the general judgment of Wall Street throughout the country? We know that these men are for the most part scrupulous in their private dealings with each other; we know that on the stock-boards, millions of dollars pass by the wave of the hand, often without so much as the scratch of a pen. Millions are the counters in their game! But who pays for these millions which so pass? The public. Who pays for the million-dollar houses which they build, and for the four-hundred-thousand-dollar pictures with which they furnish them? The public. And they pay it none the less that the money is drained from them without their knowledge, as the blood flows, all unknown, from internal wounds until the wounded man drops. Can we think, as these good gentlemen appear to think, that the people are going to stand this forever? The people are becoming informed, and when they are fully informed, no one knows what may happen. There are other revolutions than those which blossom with barricades and blush with the blood-red flags of anarchy. There is a revolution now in progress, and though, please God, it will not come to a revolution of barricades, no one can tell quite what the end will be. The whole system of representative government may be revolutionized by it.

If Wall Street be the beneficent agency which these gentlemen who conduct matters there hold it to be, then they should enlighten the people. If, on the other hand, it be what the people hold it to be, then these gentlemen who conduct it should mend their ways. Before Heaven! I sometimes wonder that these men, when they commemorate, at their Belshazzar feasts, the Babylon which they have built, do not

hear sometimes, in the pauses, the sound of the picks of the ditchers digging under their walls.

Of diplomacy, the same view is taken that is taken in other commercial matters by these captains of finance. The diplomacy which once was so ably represented by the Virginians: Jefferson, Monroe, Marshall, Clay, James Barbour, Andrew Stevenson, and by the great men of other States—by Benjamin Franklin, John Jay, Morris, the Adamses, three generations of them; by Gallatin, the Pinckneys; by Buchanan, Phelps, Bayard, and Lowell; what is it called now? It has come to be called “dollar diplomacy.” And what is the result of it? That on this continent we are the most universally hated people between the two Poles; that across the seas we are held in what often appears to be little less than detestation. I recognize the fact that it is of great importance that we should extend our markets throughout the world. But I feel that it is of greater importance that we should make it clear throughout the world that this Republic stands for liberty, for amity, for justice.

“Dollar diplomacy” is but a poor substitute for that diplomacy which made the seas safe for American ships; which has delimited the boundaries of our country and saved, through the patience, the patriotism, the far-sightedness, and the wisdom of that great Virginian, Henry Clay, the Great Northwest; which helped to bring into being, the Republics of the South-American Continent and bound them to us in friendship through generations, until the modern diplomacy alienated them and turned their affection into hate. Have we gained by the exchange? Go to South America and ask. Go north to Canada and inquire. The old diplomacy which looked to friendship as its basis and its object has given place to a diplomacy formulated to suit the fancy of conductors of finance. If an Ambassador or Minister does not suit them, a little trip is taken to Washington and out goes a minister; in goes a new one more satisfactory to them. Has any question ever been raised that these ambassadors who have thus been given their congé were not acceptable to the countries to which they were accredited, or were failing in any respect to perform their duties faithfully? No! It has been simply a question of dollar diplomacy.

This sort of thing is not likely to last; but it may last long enough to widen the breach between us and other nations until we shall stand alone in what a noted, but short-sighted

statesman of England once spoke of as "splendid isolation." No isolation is splendid any more.

The one way to solve these problems is along the lines which our fathers blazed for us; by putting the public good before private interests; by consecrating ourselves soul and body to this great end: the service of the commonwealth.

For, most disquieting of all our perils, to those who have studied the history of government and known how difficult, laborious, and slow has been the growth of liberty, how delicate and fragile is the strongest republic, how easily it is injured, and how insensibly it sinks into decay, is the tendency on the part of the people to yield to change: their readiness to applaud whatever promises a new order. It has taken generations—yes, centuries of suffering and aspiration to secure the liberty which we enjoy; generations of our forefathers fought and suffered and died to leave us this birth-right. And we are in danger of selling it—for what? For a mess of that same red pottage for which liberty has ever been bartered.

Now, what is the principal gift which our fathers have left to us, wherever we may be, intrusted with the responsibility of preserving their teachings? The prime gift with which they have blessed us is liberty. All agree as to that. The prime gift of Virginia and the old States to their sons was not wealth, nor the capacity to obtain wealth, though many of them have it in full measure. The gift was liberty. Our fathers, so far from reckoning wealth as the chief aim of life, placed it far down in the scale. They possessed wealth prior to the two great revolutions which have swept over the country, in which they were the leaders. They were the wealthiest class on this continent, possibly in the world, yet they sacrificed it without hesitation to secure liberty. When George Mason of Gunston Hall wrote that if he could leave as a patrimony to his children a crust of bread with liberty, he would be content, he was using no mere idle phrase. He and his like, the great landowners of the South, threw all into the scale for liberty. And so they did in the later Revolution.

They left us not only liberty; but they left us a chart by which to maintain that supreme blessing which God bestows on His people. They left us a government and a Constitution—complex, it is true, but so arranged that it can be reasonably, lawfully, and wisely adjusted to meet

whatever situation may arise. They left us, as the fundamental principle of that government and that Constitution, the principle of representation. The one new principle which they struck out and handed down to us is representative government as applied to a republic. All the rest had been tried. This alone was their new creation which distinguished this Republic from all other Governments then existent on the earth or which had been existent in times past.

If one wishes to fortify his arguments from the armory of experience and reason, all he has to do is to study the debates, which grew out of the Constitutional Convention, by which the Constitution of the United States was ordained. If he wishes an illustration of its value, of the imperative and supreme value of our Constitution, all he has to do is to study the history of jurisprudence covering the period, extending from the time of the war, to the close of the period of Reconstruction in the South. As the United States of America came into being through the adoption of the Constitution of the United States, so, through the protection afforded by the Constitution of the United States, the State of Virginia, together with the other Southern States, owed her preservation, as did the people of those States. By the Constitution they were preserved from a destruction, the like of which has not been known on the earth, since the Constitution of the United States was adopted.

Now we are told that this is all outworn. That the methods of procedure provided by the Constitution are antiquated and inefficient, and that the methods of amending the Constitution and meeting the new conditions are outworn and unequal to the occasion. We are told that under this very palladium of our liberties the people have been trodden down, their representatives have been debauched, legislation has been corrupted, and the Bench itself has become the hired enginery of the enemies of the people. We have been told that a New Nationalism has come into existence, and that not only all the old methods, the old procedure, but the principles themselves, for the exercise of which they were provided, are antiquated, outworn, and antagonistic to the principles which called them into being.

But one name is given to all who will not subscribe to this new teaching; but one name is provided for all who do subscribe thereto. Neither name is in the least distinctive,

neither name contains the slightest suggestion of the aims, of the motives, the ends, or the principles of the adherents of those who espouse the one side or the other. All who oppose the New Nationalism, whether they be old "stand-patters" who have stood as the bulwark of privilege, or whether they be the sane, sound, reasonable defenders of the rights of the Constitution, and of the rights of the people against privilege—have been classed together in this new vocabulary, as Reactionaries; while those who would pull down the entire structure of Government about our ears, whether they be the most eager advocates of centralization of unlimited power, or whether they be the most arrogant representatives of trusts in the land, are classed together as Progressives. At need, they take up the wildest theories that have ever been propounded, and if there be a wilder one propounded to-morrow, they will be prompt to adopt that likewise. Whoever does not subscribe to their views is told that he has no confidence in the people.

Whence came this sudden revulsion; this strange and unlooked-for uprising against that which every generation of Americans to the present time has been ready to die for? It comes from two classes and from two classes alone. The one that small class, which, availing itself of the opportunities that have been presented, have sequestered in their hands, if not all the power, at least an undue proportion of the power in this country, whether it be the power vested in organization or whether it be the power incident to material wealth. The class which, having its central office in one of the great centers of this country, has, through its selfishness, its arrogance, its assurance, its ability, monopolized in its hands a great part of that which belongs of right to the public, that is, to the people—the class who have covered it up with the guise of law, and under the guise of law, are pursuing their selfish and perilous ends.

The other class is a large one. It is not selfish like the first; but it is more ignorant. It is a class which largely has been admitted to this country within our own generation. It has not had time yet to become fully steeped in the spirit of this free land. Unused to freedom, it has a tendency to break over the line that divides freedom from license. It is readily played upon, especially by designing leaders who rise out of their own body. It has the excuse which the other class has not, that it has found it necessary to

organize, and organize in very narrow ways, for self-preservation. Unaccustomed to power, where it has found itself possessed of power, it has been unable to use it with moderation. Thus, with their energies directed in other lines than those which lead to the contemplation of the principles of this government, they have been led in a direction hostile to the old forms under which this government has achieved its success. They have seen with a clear vision, as the rest of us have seen, that the first class to which I have referred have monopolized in their hands the wealth and the rights of the people, and they have seen that they have done this under the color of the law. They have seen the greatest examples of their rapacity upheld in instances by courts subservient to their power, and in the first flush of indignation at this betrayal of what they recognize as their rights they have been led to denounce not only its particular acts of coercion and rapacity—not only the agents guilty of these particular acts, but the whole system under which these agents and their agencies have come into being. It is not unnatural that they should take this view of the case.

But what may be natural enough to an element new to our country, unversed in its history, ignorant of its traditions, knowing only the pinch of present conditions as they exist in regions which have unhappily fallen under the dominance of the selfish monopolistic class, would be most unnatural in those Americans who are the heirs of all the traditions which brought this Government into being out of the maelstrom of revolution, who have inherited with our blood the knowledge of what constitutional government has been able to accomplish, even in the short period in which it has had its exercise. On us rests a responsibility which we can never evade, of applying every energy with which God has endowed us to preserve constitutional government and adapt it to present needs. If faults which may be mended discover themselves in a great structure, do we cast it down in order to remedy them? If the roof leaks, do we pull the walls down and tear up the foundations and turn the place into a wilderness? Had our fathers taken this view, we should never have been the free country which we are, and those who are now assailing the integrity of our institutions would never have found an asylum where they would have liberty of speech, liberty of conscience, and

liberty of action. Liberty would have perished at its birth and freedom would never have been known.

The fundamental principles on which this Government is founded have been attacked by these new doctrinaires, who have substituted for those foundations of living rock, the ever-shifting sands of popular expediency. One of their chief points of attack is the independence of the judiciary. The great Virginia Convention of 1829-30 was a body which contained possibly as much intellect and wisdom as any assemblage ever gathered together in this land, or for that matter in any land under the sun. It included, among other great men, James Madison; James Monroe; John Marshall; Littleton Waller Tazewell; Philip Pendleton Barbour; John Randolph of Roanoke; Chapman Johnson; John Tyler; William B. Giles; Alexander Campbell; and Benjamin Watkins Leigh.

In that Convention all these questions relating to government were discussed and considered by the ablest men of their day. Among these questions was that of the tenure of office of the judiciary. The question might have appeared a local one, confined to Virginia alone; but the discussion, as ever, in that body went down to the basic principles of government for all time. In this discussion, the independence of the judiciary as a fundamental principle of all government was assumed, and the debate was only as to the best method of securing that independence. When the debate upon the tenure of office of the judiciary was drawing to an end an old man arose, whose name is received with veneration wherever the principles of Justice are known, and made an appeal for the absolute independence of the judiciary from every influence, even the most indirect. His name was John Marshall and he closed his argument in these words, referring to the Judges of every court:

"If they may be removed at pleasure, will any lawyer of distinction come upon your Bench? No, sir! I have always thought, from my earliest youth till now, that the greatest scourge that an angry Heaven ever inflicted upon an ungrateful and a sinning people, was an ignorant, a corrupt, or a dependent judiciary. Will you draw down this curse upon Virginia? Our ancestors thought so, we thought so until very lately, and I trust that the vote of this day will show that we think so still."

The vote upon the resolution under consideration touching the independent tenure of office of the judiciary of Virginia proved overwhelmingly that the Virginians of that

day did think so still. Are we profounder students of the science of government than they were? Have any new conditions arisen which require the tearing up of the foundations of this Government? Is our population better able to supersede *en masse* their freely chosen and selected representatives, selected because of their assumed knowledge, character, sympathy, and experience, subject to their direction and responsible to them for re-election at short intervals? If not, then let us remedy such defects as may become apparent; but let us not destroy the whole fabric of our Government.

We have seen within a very brief time a return to power of a party which proclaims itself and has a right to proclaim itself the party of government by the people, the party of democracy—as opposed to the party of privilege. For the first time in more than a generation a man of Virginia birth, of Southern rearing, and of experience covering both the South and the North, and therefore of a knowledge of the conditions of both sections, has been elected President of the United States, Chief Magistrate of this Nation. He is the leader of the democracy, neither of the progressive wing of that democracy, nor of the conservative wing; but leader of the whole of the democracy—leader for the first time, of a united democracy—standing out boldly, courageously for the preservation and maintenance of the rights of the people—clearly bound by their direction, to preserve all that has been tried and found true in the experience of this Government heretofore, and to discard whatever has been found impracticable and unsound, in that period. To his aid, he has the right to summon all the wisdom and all the experience of his party; nay, all the wisdom, all the experience of every party, for when he shall have taken his oath of office, he will become President, not of any wing of a party, not of any one party; but of all parties and of all the people of the United States, and his oath of office will be to protect the Constitution of the United States, and faithfully perform the duties of the President.

So far as may be seen and foretold at this time, no stronger character has been called to the Chief Magistracy of the nation in its history, or one who, on his entrance upon his duties has given promise of being more independent of improper influences or more devoted to the fundamental principles of the Republic. A profound student of compara-

tive politics from his youth, deeply read in the science of government, on which he has been a thoughtful commentator; absolutely familiar with the history of this country, he brings to the exercise of his exalted office as great promise of soundness of view, loftiness of purpose, and steadfastness of principle as any man has done since the days of Washington. It has been the custom of late years for the fraction of the people of this country, intrenched by privilege which they have paid for of the people's money, and which has been secured to them by that payment, to proclaim with wearisome insistence that the triumph of democracy meant the overturning of everything in our life worth holding on to; that in its train would follow panic and poverty and destruction of all that our fathers revered. They have proclaimed that the reduction of the expenses of the united establishments of the army and the navy would bring disaster in its train; that commerce would be imperiled and business be destroyed. They have been more than puzzled by the quiet, dignified, self-contained attitude of him who has been called to the leadership of the democracy. Where he has spoken, he has laid down principles with clearness and confidence. No clamor has moved him to announce his intentions in the details of his administration. Like Grant, he has listened and been silent, as to his proposed appointments. Like Jefferson, when he has spoken, it is to declare only the soundest principles of governmental policy. Without undertaking to press the parallel too far, for the natural change of conditions ever prevents historic parallels being absolute, there is a somewhat singular resemblance in the situation now to the situation when Jefferson was called by the democracy to assume the reins of government. There was the same overthrow of the party of centralization, the same jeremiads issued incessantly from the adherents of that party, the same forecast of absolute overthrow and destruction. Let us see what a thoughtful student and historian of that time has said of it:

"No class or region or single school of politicians or thinkers could keep the mastery or determine the course of such a people, growing after such a fashion, on such a continent. Democracy, free force, an equal footing for all men in opinion, effort, and attainment were the very conditions of its being: there could be no leading-strings. Mr. Jefferson spoke the spirit of the day, its only acceptable principle in affairs. The Government had passed into the people's party."

"Its programme, as Mr. Jefferson spoke it, accorded with its origin: The restriction of Federal powers within straight constitutional limits, an unembarrassed field for the powers of local self-government within the several States, the payment of the public debt, the reduction of the armed forces of the country, and consequently of the taxes, to the lowest practicable point, and as nearly as might be free trade at the ports: a government simple, inexpensive, unmeddlesome. Some of the latest and most partisan acts of the Federalists in the new Congress, with its working majority of Republicans, proceeded to undo. . . . The Federalist Naturalization Law of June, 1798, which required a residence of fourteen years as a condition precedent to the acquisition of citizenship by a foreigner, was repealed, and the old period of five years restored.

"But there the reaction stopped. The new Congress reduced the Federal taxes and the customs duties at the ports; cut down the army and navy establishments; retrenched expenses and lessened burdens, as had been promised and expected; but the despondent forebodings of those Federalists who had looked to see a fatal retrogression in the character of the government were not fulfilled. The people's men were not, after all, 'Jacobins and miscreants,' and Mr. Cabot was apparently not yet justified in considering 'democracy to be the government of the worst.' Mr. Jefferson called Mr. Madison to the Secretaryship of the State, a man whom all the country knew to be a patriot and a statesman. He made Albert Gallatin, of Pennsylvania, Secretary of the Treasury, and financiers soon learned to trust the clear-headed Swiss for judgment and capacity almost as much as they had trusted Mr. Hamilton himself. There was, at any rate, no revolution in the business methods of the government.

"Mr. Jefferson was too wise a politician to alienate the very men whose suffrages had brought him into office. He knew that many thoughtful men who had before always voted with the Federalists had in the last election voted for the Democratic-Republican electors—not because ready to see the government experimented with, but because they hated the taxes with which the Federalist Congress loaded them, disliked the new tone and temper of the Federalist leaders, and believed that, for all they were so radical in their talk, the leaders of the opposition would simplify the government without weakening it or doing it damage. He knew that he was on trial to prove his conservatism as well as to prove his capacity for reform. He meant to prove himself no enemy of an efficient Federal government, but only an enemy of extremes.

"It turned out that he had judged the temper of the country and the posture of affairs to a nicety, and had brought in a new régime which was to give its opponents abundant time to assess its qualities. Mr. Jefferson remained eight years in office; and handed on the Presidency to men of his own school of political principle, who kept it for sixteen years more."*

Thus has spoken the present head of the democracy, in whose hands have been reposed by the democracy the responsibilities of the *administration of the Presidency*.

* *History of the American People* by Woodrow Wilson, vol. iii., pp. 173-4, 176-8.

On us devolve the responsibilities of upholding his hands in whatever relates to the perpetuation of this Government and the welfare of the people. On us will devolve equally the responsibility of withstanding, no matter by whom advocated, whatever tends to impair the foundations of this Government and injure the people. I do not know how we may accomplish this better than by consecrating ourselves anew to the principle to which our fathers consecrated themselves—to the principle that patriotism is above place; that liberty is above wealth or power, and that whatever tends to imperil liberty is at war with patriotism and with liberty.

Old Virginia is doing her part in the new movement. She has of late years been coming to the fore and resuming her position of primacy in the National Counsels.

Happily, the moral sense of the people of the country is beginning to be awakened. Let it be once fully aroused and nothing on earth can stand against it.

The first step in this sound direction is the casting out of our life of the false ideal of Commercialism; the setting up once more of the old ideals. If we but do this we need have no fear for this Republic.

Let us set before ourselves the old ideals and follow them as our fathers followed them, through evil report and good report, to the end that Freedom may never perish out of the land, and that Peace and Happiness, Truth and Justice, Religion and Piety, may be established among us to all generations.

THOMAS NELSON PAGE.